

New Mexico Department of Health Encourages Providers to Screen for Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

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Summary

In recent months, the United States has seen an abnormally large increase in the prevalence of Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) has been monitoring the situation in New Mexico and has seen a small but significant increase in laboratory confirmed cases of RSV in past weeks.

For high-risk patients (see list below) with respiratory symptoms, NMDOH advises providers to screen for SARS-CoV-2, RSV and other respiratory viruses, when possible, especially in hospitalized patients.

RSV is a common respiratory virus, which usually causes a mild, cold-like illness that people recover from within a week or two. However, the virus can also cause serious, life-threatening illness in very young children and older adults, especially:

- Premature infants
- Infants 6 months and younger
- Children 2 years and younger with chronic lung disease or congenital heart disease
- Children with suppressed immune systems
- Children who have neuromuscular disorders
- Adults over 65
- Adults with chronic heart or lung disease
- Adults with weakened immune systems

It is the most common cause of bronchiolitis and pneumonia in children under 1 year of age.

Symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing
- Bronchiolitis (inflammation in the small airways of the lungs)
- Pneumonia
- In very young infants, irritability, decreased activity, and/or apnea may be the only symptoms of infection

There is currently no specific treatment or vaccine available for RSV.

Most cases of RSV usually occur during the typical influenza season, in the fall and winter months. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted these typical patterns of circulation, and we are now seeing increases in respiratory illness caused by routine pathogens such as RSV, in these summer months (please see recent publication below for more information).¹ NMDOH appreciates your cooperation in increasing your surveillance and vigilance in testing for respiratory viruses besides SARS-CoV-2.

For more information on RSV, see the following:

- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection:
<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/index.html>
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection for Healthcare Providers
<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/clinical/index.html>

¹ Olsen SJ, Winn AK, Budd AP, et al. Changes in Influenza and Other Respiratory Virus Activity During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, 2020–2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2021;70:1013–1019. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7029a1>